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ABSTRACT

Because of their concern regarding vocational education programs not being responsive to labor market conditions, the Congress has established the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC). The primary outcomes desired by Congress in creating NOICC were labor market supply and demand data for planning and occupational information for career and vocational decision making. These outcomes have remained essentially the same, although the participants, roles, and expectations of NOICC and the State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees (SOICCs) were greatly strengthened in 1982 and 1984. NOICC and SOICC accomplishments include SOICCs in every state and territory working with NOICC to develop and use labor market supply and demand information and access to the occupational information by millions of individuals making career decisions. The NOICC and SOICC network has developed a cooperative endeavor within and between states and among Federal agencies and worked toward standardization of occupational classification. States have become more successful in developing and implementing Career Information Delivery Systems and producing employment projections and/or supply estimates. The guidance and counseling community has the responsibility to guard the freedom of occupational and career choices and to help individuals make informed choices. Professional associations must work together to deliver occupational information effectively. (YLB)

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FEDERAL AND STATE LEADERSHIP IN THE PRODUCTION AND DELIVERY OF OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

Presented to
The National Invitational Conference on
Career Counseling and Guidance in the Computer Age

BY
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FEDERAL AND STATE LEADERSHIP

IN THE PRODUCTION AND DELIVERY OF OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

I am honored to have an opportunity to address this very distinguished group today. The theme of the Conference--that of Improving the Delivery of Career Information--is an extremely important one. My two staff people who concern themselves with this theme are in the audience and I would like to have you meet them. They are Dr. Joyce Cook and Mrs. Gisela Harkin.

I was especially pleased with your invitation when I saw that the list of conference sponsors reads like an organizational "Who's Who" in the Career Development Guidance and Counseling community. You already know that our likelihood of reaching a goal is far greater when we work together, than when we work in opposition to each other, or when we work toward the same end, but on different priorities.

That is what this Conference is all about! The Statutory groups involved in the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee and in the State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees, (suppliers of occupational and labor market information) wish to work with you (the users of that information) to pool resources--human and technical and financial--so that through collaborative efforts, all of us can accomplish goals which none of us could reach in isolation from the other.

You will be interested to know that President Reagan signed the new Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act (VEA) of 1984, on October 19. This represents the fourth major redirection of the Federal role in vocational education since this role was first established with the 1917 Smith Hughes Act.

The new Act emphasizes program improvement, promotes closer collaboration between business, industry, labor and education; and provides the means through which to improve the productivity of the American work force. It is consistent with the goals of the Administration to insure that our nation is competitive internationally and that, as a nation, we are continuing strong and free.

Among its provisions, the Carl Perkins VEA of 1984 provides for Comprehensive Career Guidance and Counseling Programs and for our continued support of the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee.

I have a threefold purpose in my presentation today:

First, I would like to provide you something of a status report on the Federal and State efforts to provide the occupational information needed by those individuals who must make career choices and vocational decisions and by those who must plan and deliver the vocational and career preparation programs in which they will enroll.

Second, I'd like to stress how critical the energies of the guidance and counseling community are in delivering occupational information to individuals who need it as a basis for career development and vocational decisions.

Finally, and at an overall level, I'd like to convince you that no one (of the groups assembled here) can succeed in its mission related to the delivery of occupational information without the others. I urge each of you to leave the conference with a new or a renewed commitment to work together.

I saw an article recently in the Vocational Guidance Quarterly, the title of which I found colorful and expressive. The article addressed the topic of cooperation between vocational education and guidance and counseling groups. The authors called it "Hand in Hand or a Fist in the Teeth." The Congress was saying exactly that to the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor in 1976 when it established the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee. Education and Labor were either to work together "hand in hand" or get a "fist in the teeth" from Congress.

At that point in time--i.e., in 1975 and 1976--Congress was concerned that vocational education programs were not as responsive to labor market conditions as many felt they should be. At the same time, they were concerned that vocational education programs and Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) Programs were duplicating offerings and, perhaps, oversupplying workers in one occupational field and undersupplying workers in another. Since then, of course, higher education degree programs have encountered the same kind of question; that is, the question of whether their offerings can be justified in relation to employment opportunities.

So, the first and primary outcome desired by Congress in creating NOICC was that of collecting, standardizing, and projecting labor market supply and demand data upon which training program offerings could be justified and around which programs offered in high schools, two-year postsecondary, and four-year higher education institutions could be coordinated.

The second outcome added by Congress in 1977-78, was that of using occupational and labor market information to meet the needs of young people making career and vocational decisions. It was broadened to include adults in the 1982 Job Training Partnership Act.

Congress greatly strengthened the roles expected of NOICC and the SOICCs in other ways with the passage of the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982. In this Act, they required:

-- a comprehensive system for developing labor market supply and demand data that is responsive to economic demand and that meets education and training planning needs at State and substate levels

-- a system so standardized that projections of potential economic growth or decline can be made and so that the resulting impact on individuals, industries, and communities can be assessed

-- assurance that, to the extent feasible, automated technology will be used to simplify the burden of multiple surveys on employers

-- the publishing and dissemination of labor market, occupational supply and demand, and individualized career information to agencies, institutions, and individual users

-- the conduct of studies and the provision of technical assistance to the States to improve the occupational information systems

-- the integration of Armed Forces career opportunities into the overall National, State, and local career information systems.

Congress also reinforced the roles expected of NOICC in 1982 by adding, to the original Statutory Committee, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Installations and Logistics. What began as a partnership between Education and Labor in 1976, became a quadripartite association in 1982, with the addition of Commerce and Defense.

Now, in 1984, the Carl Perkins VEA adds, from the Education Department, the heads of the National Center for Educational Statistics, the Rehabilitative Services Administration, and the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs. It

adds, from the Agriculture Department, the Under Secretary for Small Community and Rural Development. Federal agency involvement grew from two agencies in 1976, to four agencies in 1982, to five agencies in 1984. The message from Congress is that broad Federal Agency involvement is essential and that occupational information is a national priority.

Though the participants, roles, and expectations of NOICC and the SOICCs were greatly strengthened in 1982 and 1984, the primary outcomes desired have remained essentially the same: labor market supply and demand data for planning and occupational information for career and vocational decisionmaking.

The Office of Vocational and Adult Education, obviously, has a high stake in the successful accomplishment of both of the primary purposes outlined by Congress. On the surface, and to the uninitiated, they may seem to be fairly similar, if not one and the same. Would not occupational information for planning be the same as occupational information for career and vocational decisionmaking? Conceptually, would it not simply be a matter of counting--counting the numbers of job opportunities (demand) and counting the number of program completers (supply)? The answers? Well, yes and no, to each question. It is, in fact, one of the more complex tasks ever undertaken by the Government. It is a mandate to create order out of chaos; chaos in which each minute data element has its controversies over turfsmanship, politics, and the knotty technical problems of definition, collection,

standardization, analysis, and reporting. The fact that the hard work of the dedicated NOICC staff still proceeds may, indeed, be one of the phenomena of the Twentieth Century that gets a lot of attention when people look for examples of exceptional inter-governmental relations and Federal leadership.

As to NOICC and SOICC accomplishments, let us recognize that as of 1984:

-- Program planners and career decisionmakers in all States and Territories have a State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (SOICC) working in tandem with NOICC to help them better develop and use labor market supply and demand information.

-- State level planners have been trained in using the new handbook, Vocational Preparation and Occupations (VPO) in a "Train-the-Trainer" mode. They will now be able to train others within their States. The Handbook, which links the major occupational classi-fication systems with each other and with vocational education programs,

was printed. 3,500 copies sold out in eight months. An additional 3,000 copies have now been printed.

-- States, on demand, can secure standard tables and can access special computer tapes that crosswalk occupations in the various classification systems in order to get the data they need for State and local planning

-- State and local planners have a supporting structure for using occupational information to plan and monitor training programs

-- Program planners in 12 States will be able to access occupational information via microcomputer. State and local planners will have microcomputer support in estimating employment by occupation in substate areas

-- Millions of individuals making career decisions in schools, other educational institutions, employment service offices, rehabilitation agencies, and various community organizations in 40 States (more than 11,000 sites) can access pertinent occupational information. Many can read about occupations of interest in a narrative form on a computer display terminal, get a hard copy, or watch brief videotaped presentations.

-- Early in 1985, individuals making career decisions in at least the 32 States covered by a NOICC grant will learn about career and training opportunities in the military, as a matter of course, along with civilian opportunities.

-- Inservice training will have been provided for well over 6,000 counselors in more than 45 States and territories by the end of 1984. Plus counselor educators in universities in 6 pilot States are testing a document designed to provide counselors in training with information on the availability and use of labor market and occupational information in the career counseling process.

-- In 1985, classroom teachers wishing to incorporate career development activities into their basic curriculum will have the support of a guide by using the Occupational Outlook Handbook for this purpose. This will ensure currency of the information being given young people in their school programs.

As to modes and methods of Federal/State leadership and collaboration, the NOICC and SOICC network has:

-- created a cooperative endeavor within and between States and among Federal agencies which has resulted in improved communications

-- worked toward the standardization of multiple systems for classifying occupations and dual systems for classifying vocational programs

-- devised means for "crosswalking" all the major occupational classification systems and related these systems to the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP).

-- provided extensive training for both Federal and State agency personnel in the use of the classification systems, crosswalks, and related materials.

-- designed training materials and offered training programs to help a broad range of Occupational Information System users, including counselors and counselor educators, understand the many resources available to them.

The NOICC staff has expended more than 80 percent of their funds since beginning their operation for supporting, either directly or indirectly, their State counterparts, the SOICCs. Additional NOICC funds have been used to provide technical assistance to the States and other agencies and organizations.

They have converted former competitors into collaborators across Federal agencies and have created an unprecedented partnership between the Federal government and most of the States.

We have learned much about State leadership in the creation and delivery of occupational information. For example, we know that:

-- States have been far more successful in developing and implementing Career Information Delivery Systems to serve the needs of young people and adults making career and vocational decisions than they have in supplying labor market data which are needed for planning and coordinating vocational programs. There appears to be reason for the discrepancy between accomplishments toward the two outcomes. Labor market demand (occupational outlook) for trained workers has been studied for years by the U.S. Department of Labor. This, together with the descriptions of work in the DOT, forms the primary content upon which individuals make long-range career decisions. Local demand and the "supply" side of trained workers (additional elements essential to human resource planning) is quite another story. Among the problems that are being addressed by my staff, NOICC, and the State Committees are inconsistent program definitions, inconsistent instructional content from one program to another (though the program definitions

appear the same), and controversy from one training institution to another over how supply data will be collected, who will collect them, and who will interpret them, once collected.

-- Success at the State level is related less to the organizational location of the SOICC Director and staff than it is to the level of authority commanded by those who sit on the State-level Statutory Committee. There is less progress when those who sit on the Committee operate at a low level of authority and have to call their boss each time a decision has to be made. Some have overcome this problem by producing "white papers" in advance of meetings so that differences or their negotiated resolution can be worked out before the meeting convenes.

-- In at least some instances, it was possible to activate an otherwise passive Committee via consumer demand; i.e., only when users began knocking on their doors for data, did things begin to move.

-- It did not seem to matter whether the leadership position of the SOICC Director had been "earned" or "conferred." What seemed to matter, more, was that the

Director, in either case, was assigned full-time and provided continuity of direction or support. Frequent turnover in the position of the Director was not a good sign.

-- An absence of staff support, while likely a problem in many cases, was often offset by the ability of the Director, through an "authority-level Committee" to get people detailed full-time to work on the technical aspects of the endeavor. When staff members worked on SOICC activities only in their spare time, progress was not quite so great.

-- In no instance studied was significant progress associated with aggressive or coercive leadership behavior. Like their counterparts at the National level, most successful State SOICC Directors used persuasive marketing, or supporting leadership behavior.

Progress in some States is so noteworthy as to warrant specific mention. In Oregon, Utah, Florida, and Michigan, among others, extensive use of labor market information in planning or funding vocational education programs is visible.

Florida, for example, has 11 planning Regions and the Occupational Employment Statistics data are projected accordingly. Florida has a strong program evaluation component based on placements, with loss of State funding a consequence of not meeting standards. In Michigan, the State funds vocational education programs on a sliding scale with programs in high demand occupational areas receiving almost 100 percent funding and programs in very low demand occupational areas receiving no funding at all.

Both States--Florida and Michigan--have strong Career Information Delivery Systems. Florida is using its system, that is also tied into a computerized job bank, for vocational rehabilitation and counseling. Florida's Vocational Rehabilitation group, with the help of the SOICC, is using the system to relate training to employers' needs and to target employers with a high demand for its clients' skills and abilities. In Michigan, the system (which has served as a model for some other States) has also been augmented by a computerized job bank. It has been used by the UAW/Ford Training Center and General Motors for career counseling and for helping displaced workers find the job opportunities for which they are most qualified by background and experience.
In defense of other States, it should be noted that six States, including Michigan, had an early start on their Career Information Delivery Systems. Michigan began a pilot project in 1976 with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor. Florida, by contrast, only began in 1979 with funding from NOICC.

Your Conference agenda here will introduce you to many creative ideas about how to use and deliver career information. They range from delivery modes using main-frame computers to those using videotapes to those using "800" toll-free hotlines.

To conclude my remarks on State leadership, NOICC reports that all States are now producing projections of employment by occupations (of which 38 produce substate projections) and 45 States produce estimates of training supply (including 31 who produce substate supply estimates). Also, some 40 States had some type of supply/demand product in 1983. All of this represents significant progress, but there is yet a considerable amount of work to be done in some States.

I would like to finish off what has already been a lengthy presentation by stressing how critical the energies of the guidance and counseling community are in delivering career information to individuals who need it for career development or vocational decisions.

Access to the best possible occupational and labor market information is critical to career development and decisionmaking in a system of free enterprise like that of the United States where full responsiblity for the results of a career choice are borne by the individual. Labor market information is critical to the ability of National, State and local governments in all countries to engage in human resource planning.

We, in the United States, believe, in addition, that individual citizens are both free to choose and responsible for their choices. To us, career choices belong to each human being; they cannot be made for one human being by any other.

The career and vocational counseling community in this country has a special responsibility to guard the freedom of occupational and career choices and a special responsibility to empower the individual to make future choices in his or her own behalf. Counselors, likewise, have a special responsibility for seeing that every individual has the information necessary to make an "informed choice"--a choice that is based on as accurate and as objective as possible an understanding of the individual's own abilities, aptitudes, and inclinations as well as the best possible understanding of vocational and career possibilities.

Reserving freedom of choice to the individual and supplying accurate and current occupational and labor market information are complicated by the fact that neither people nor vocational possibilities are stable. Further, as each educational or training choice is made, it affects the range of future possibilities. Career decisionmaking is not a single event. It is a series of events strung over a lifetime--each event requiring current information about self and about vocational possibilities.

The vocational choices made over a lifetime are far more descriptive and expressive of the worth and quality of the human life than many theorists would accede. The concept of the centrality of occupational pursuits to the expression of human worth is as old as human society. We, as a society rooted in the Judeo-Christian work ethic, have been taught from our earliest days that it is through the work and the avocational products of our minds and hands that our innermost propensities are made visible. Far more important than material possessions accumulated is the fact that we have been able to express and describe our worth to the rest of the world through vocational and avocational pursuits.

This is so ingrained that people who are displaced from employment due to economic conditions or other factors, totally divorced from their own performance and dedication, behave not unlike those traumatized by war or physical abuse.

Lawrence Perfetti and Bill Bingham, in March, 1983, reported on a study of unemployment and self-esteem among metal refinery workers. They found significant differences between the self-esteem of the employed worker and the worker who had been separated as a result of workforce cutbacks. It should be noted that the subjects studied were workers in manufacturing--workers whom Studs Turkel had earlier found to be even less satisfied and more alienated from their work than workers in most other groups. If the differences in self-esteem of the magnitude found by Perfetti and Bingham are true for manufacturing workers, they can be assumed to be even greater for workers who make a greater and more self-fulfilling psychological investment in their work. Perfitti and Bingham support the theory that the displaced worker, without regard for the economic cause of displacement, feels that he or she is, nevertheless, somehow responsible.

Those who have studied the economic displacements of the Great Depression found significant negative impacts on the family, including family role dysfunction, family role breakdown, and evidence of increased physical, academic and emotional problems in children of the unemployed. All of our young people should be prepared to face a working world where rapid changes and, therefore, periodic worker displacements will be even more a fact of their lives than of the lives of their parents.

If we enjoy no other positive outcome from the current shift from an industrial society to a technological one, it should be a redefinition of the centrality of work to the mental health of this Nation's people. An outgrowth of that redefinition should be our commitment to make such transitions easier and less traumatic in the near future and for all time.

We are making the transition to a technological society much easier than our ancestors made their transition into an industrial one. It is essential to acknowledge, nevertheless, that the same kind of shift occurred before, is occurring now, and will likely occur in the future.

The National Vocational Guidance Association has made a great contribution to the vocational education and counseling community by setting the standards by which we all now judge the quality of occupational information. The Association of Computer-Based Systems for Career Information has set standards for the delivery of career information via computer. The American School Counselor Association has recently established the role of the school counselor in career guidance. The professional community has begun oto look at the ethical issues involved with the use of computer-assisted counseling, testing, and guidance systems as evidenced by an article by James P. Sampson, Jr. and K. Richard Pyle in the Personnel and Guidance Journal of January 1983.

The National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee staff has integrated the work of the professional associations into a set of guidelines for the State-wide Career Information Delivery Systems it supports.

Together, we are positioned to use technology in a way that contributes positively to the human condition in which we find ourselves. Career guidance and counseling and the tools necessary for more informed career decisions is a theme that, during this period like no other, can catalyze the energies and support of school counselors, mental health counselors, rehabilitation counselors, vocational educators, industry-based training and development specialists, State employment security personnel, economists, and employers in business and industry.

If we work together, we can meet the challenge of the technology-based working world and, simultaneously, create a system that helps both institutions and human beings respond sanely to rapidly changing work requirements. If we fail, I believe that another era of social dysfunction may result as we move into a technology-based economy.

I charge you here and now--during the remainder of this Conference and after you return to your offices--to both develop and demand the kind of career information and the kind of delivery system that must exist if all of you--suppliers and users, alike--are to carry out your professional responsibilities without apology!!

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